

Coast Guard Transitioning Interagency Operations Centers' Software to Sustainment

March 13, 2013

The Coast Guard's Acquisition Directorate is working with partners within the Coast Guard and other Department of Homeland Security components to prepare for the transition of core capabilities of its Interagency Operations Centers (IOC) project to the next phase of its acquisition life cycle: operations and sustainment.

The heart of the IOC project is a software platform called WatchKeeper. This data fusion and information management system provides a common tool that can be accessed by Coast Guard users and the full spectrum of port partners, including U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), Immigration and Customs Enforcement, state agencies and local law enforcement. With WatchKeeper, these partners can share information and develop collaborative approaches to keeping the nation's largest marine ports secure by monitoring operations, targeting vessels of interest and developing interagency missions and operations.

"The WatchKeeper technology provides a flexible, automated tool that is capable of supporting the major foundational capabilities of the IOC concept," said W. Jewuan Davis, the IOC project's technical director. "Once fully deployed and matured, it will allow for the consolidation of a number of disparate systems currently being used to form a common platform."

The Coast Guard has deployed WatchKeeper as a technology demonstration to 22 of 35 planned locations, and is on schedule to complete deployment to all locations by the end of fiscal year 2014. Meanwhile, the project office is preparing to conduct developmental test and evaluation of the tool ahead of transitioning it to operations and sustainment. Testing is slated to occur at three locations: Charleston, S.C., Jacksonville, Fla., and San Francisco.

During the tests, the Coast Guard will work with partners such as CBP to demonstrate how WatchKeeper can process and share data from a variety of sources to facilitate collaborative planning and operations across a wide range of port security responsibilities. One such example is coordination

of vessel-of-interest tracking, boarding and inspection—activities that are both carried out by the Coast Guard and CBP under their respective law enforcement authorities.

"WatchKeeper can help partner agencies be more efficient," Davis said. "The system consumes and shares data from a majority of Coast Guard maritime data publishing systems. During the developmental testing, we will also be pulling data from CBP to share it within the enterprise architecture."

WatchKeeper enterprise data is derived from a number of Coast Guard publishing systems, including the Nationwide Automatic Identification System, the Marine Information for Safety and Law Enforcement database, the Maritime Awareness Global Network, the Enterprise Geographic Information System, the Ship Arrival Notification System, and the Web-based Common Operational Picture. WatchKeeper enterprise CBP data is derived from the Automated Targeting System for crew, passenger and cargo vetting information.

The Coast Guard established the IOC project in response to the Security and Accountability for Every (SAFE) Port Act of 2006, which required enhanced unity of effort in protecting America's largest marine ports. WatchKeeper is part of the materiel solution to meet this mandate. In order for a facility to earn the designation of an IOC, partner agencies must have shared access to the WatchKeeper software, as well as an interagency agreement in place for regular coordination meetings, shared awareness of maritime assets' operational schedules, coordination between Coast Guard and CBP for vessel inspections, and a unified command structure.